

TAXONOMIC NOTES ON SOME BIRDS FROM EAST AFRICA

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During the course of a research visit to the Sub-department of Ornithology, British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring, in September/October 1985, the opportunity was taken to study the subspecific taxonomy of a wide range of Afrotropical bird species. Findings on some of the species studied are now seen as being at variance with those adopted and taken into the standard check-list for East Africa (*Birds of East Africa* (Britton (Ed.) 1980) some years ago. In order to make these new findings available to students, the following comments are submitted. While the bulk of the work was carried out at Tring, some of the studies were pursued further in subsequent visits to the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, the Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn, and the Durban Natural History Museum.

Buccanodon whytii (Shelley) Whyte's Barbet

In the arrangement adopted in *Birds of East Africa*, nominate *B. whytii* (Shelley, 1893): Zomba, southern Malawi, is listed as occurring at localities in the Songea district of southeastern Tanzania. The series at Tring, while not as replete as one would wish, indicate that *B. w. whytii* is confined to southern Malawi, perhaps extending marginally into adjacent Mozambique territory. North of its range to the west of Lake Malawi it is replaced by *B. w. angoniensis* Benson, 1964, which differs in having the ground colour of the breast, belly and lateral surfaces saturated reddish olive-brown, the feather tipping buffy. In *B. w. whytii* such parts are pale buffish brown, the feathers fringed off-white.

The Songea population is referable to neither of the foregoing subspecies. It lies closest to *angoniensis* but displays more extensive metallic blue-black over the lower fore-throat, and the ventral ground colour is dark earthen brown, lacking the reddish nuance present in *angoniensis*, the feathers tipped white rather than buff. The tail also ranges shorter in length: 46.5-51 (49.1), versus 52.5-54 mm in *B.w. whytii*, in the three paratypes available, these collected by I.H. Dillingham in July 1955. The population was named *B. w. euroum* Clancey, 1956: Songea, southeastern Tanzania, and in East Africa both this race and *B. w. stresemanni* Grote, 1935, and *B. w. terminatum* Clancey, 1956, should be admitted. Nominate *B. whytii* requires to be seen as extra-limital.

Pogoniulus chrysoconus (Temminck) Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird

In the SAOS Checklist of Southern African Birds (Clancy (Ed.) 1980), the range of *P. c. extoni* (Layard, 1871): Kanye, southeastern Botswana, is restricted to the northwestern Orange Free State, the northeastern Cape, southeastern Botswana and the Transvaal (on the plateau). The population of southeastern Tanzania placed as *extoni* in *Birds of East Africa*, with a range from Songea and Liwale north to the Mikumi

NP requires to be referred to *P. c. dryas* Clancey & Lawson, 1961: Panda, Inhambane district, southern Mozambique. This taxon differs from *extoni*, in being smaller in size (wings of males and females 55.5-60, versus 60-65 mm). Over the dorsal surface the streaked pileum lacks the heavy obfuscation of black present in *extoni*, and has the light streaks over the back markedly whiter. Ventrally, the fore-throat is paler yellow-green, and the rest of the underside is whiter.

In the high west of Tanzania to the south of the nominate race, the population is again not attributable to *extoni* but to *P. c. rhodesiae* Grant, 1915: Chambezi Valley, northeastern Zambia. This taxon again lacks the blackish clouding over the streaked crown. In the main it resembles *dryas* but is longer-winged and has the ventral surface generally tinged with greenish buff or light citrine.

The material in the collection at Tring supports the arrangement of the subspecies as outlined in the *SAOS Checklist*. The races occurring in East Africa should be as follows: *P. c. chrysoconus*, *P. c. rhodesiae* and *P. c. dryas*.

Cercotrichas barbata (Hartlaub & Finsch) Bearded Scrub Robin
Over ten years ago the present writer (Clancey 1974) demonstrated the presence of geographical variation in *C. barbata* warranting the arrangement of the populations into two subspecies in north/south groupings. In the collection of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring, are several specimens taken at the corrected type-locality Caconda, Huila, Angola, by J. de Anchieta, who also shot the original material on which Hartlaub & Finsch based their description in 1870. This sample and the balance of the material at Tring comports with earlier findings that the northern populations ranging from northern Angola (in Cuanza Norte, Malange, Lunda, etc.), southern Zaire, adjacent Zambia and western Tanzania (Tukuyu northwest to Kigoma (at Busondo and Nzilandagaza), *vide Birds of East Africa* p. 135), are separable from the southern, more mesic, ones. They average browner, less grey, above, and over the fore-throat the grey lateral surfaces are more broadly darker greyish. Ventrally, the breast, sides and flanks are darker and redder, the white over the belly constricted, and that present tinged buff. The under tail coverts are also buffy. These more saturated elements were characterized as *C. b. thamnodytes* Clancey, 1974: Bitale, 29 km north of Kigoma, Western Province, Tanzania, the range of which taxon is centred on the southern sector of the drainage fan of the Zaire River, ranging marginally into East Africa.

Cercotrichas quadrivirgata (Reichenow) Eastern Bearded Scrub Robin
Clancey (1960) showed that the subspecies *C. q. rovumae* (Grote, 1921): described from the headwaters of the Rovuma River, southeastern Tanzania, was separable from nominate *C. quadrivirgata* (Reichenow, 1879): Kipini, lower Tana River, Kenya, on both colour and mensural grounds. Later, Benson & White (1962) contested these findings, using material in the collection at Tring and from other centres. During a visit to the Los Angeles County Museum in May 1979, I

examined, albeit briefly, the large East African series of this scrub robin housed in that centre, while in September 1985, I examined the series in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) at Tring.

In their 1962 contribution, Benson & White failed to heed the caveat that in assessing size variation in the present scrub robin, care should be exercised in seeing that only correctly sexed and fully adult specimens are used. In my 1960 paper I resuscitated *C. q. rovumae*, differentiating it from the nominate race on the basis of great size, rather darker (actually warmer brown) upper-parts and redder, more saturated, buff lower fore-throat and breast. A re-examination of the size parameter results in the following:

C. q. quadrivirgata wing-lengths (mm)

Coastal Kenya	9 males	76-81 (78.1), SD 2.14
	2 females	74, 75
Somalia	1 male	79

C. q. rovumae wing-lengths (mm)

Eastern Zimbabwe	7 males	82-88 (84.7), SD 1.88
	5 females	76-82 (79.2), SD 2.38
Malawi	11 males	81-89 (83.9), SD 2.54
	6 females	76-80 (78.5), SD 1.74
Mozambique	5 males	81-88.5 (84.4), SD 3.20
	4 females	76-79 (78.1), SD 1.43
Eastern Tanzania	5 males	81-83.5 (82.0), SD 1.17
	4 females	77-79 (77.8), SD 0.84

In the case of tail-length (mm):

males of *C. q. quadrivirgata* ranged 67-72, while females were 64-67.

males of *C. q. rovumae* ranged 72-84, females 68-74.

Specimens with tails shorter than the minima given have been assessed as retaining juvenile rectrices.

The extensive material in the Los Angeles County Museum collection showed that the population of coastal Kenya differed from birds occurring further south in East Africa not only in being smaller but also in having the dorsal colouration more earthen and less warm brown. Below, the medio-ventral plane was more extensively white and the breast band paler buff. While material in fresh condition from Somalia has been extremely limited, that seen suggests that there is no valid difference between the population of the coastal regions of the southwest (*C. q. erlangeri* (Reichenow, 1905): lower Juba River, between Bardera and Umfudu, southwestern Somalia), and that of the Lower Tana River (topotypical of *C. q. quadrivirgata*), and the indications are that *erlangeri* should be merged into the nominate race, the southern limits of range of which lie in the lowlands of northeastern Tanzania. Populations occurring south of this and also in the interior of East Africa as far north as Voi in Kenya will now become *C. q. rovumae*.

In the first of their important contributions to the ornithology of Tanzania, Ripley & Heinrich (1966) described *C. q. brunnea* from west of Lake Manyara, at 03:35S, 35:50E, on two specimens. While I am unable to comment constructively on the validity of *brunnea*, the pattern of variation now determined for the species in East Africa presupposes that this taxon may be part of *C. q. rovumae*. The well-differentiated *C. q. greenwayi* (Moreau, 1938): Mafia Island, Tanzania with much of the rufous in the ventral and facial surfaces replaced by white and with greyer upper surfaces, is confined to its type-locality island and Zanzibar.

Clytospiza monteiri (Hartlaub) Brown Twinspot

This attractive species is currently treated as monotypic, *C. m. ugandensis* (van Someren, 1921): Masindi, Uganda, being considered a synonym of *C. monteiri* (Hartlaub, 1860): Bembe, Congo district, northern Angola (cf. Traylor (1968)). Material studied in 1985 in the centres at Tring, Tervuren and Bonn indicates that the species is divisible into northern and southern races, the long series in the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, showing this variation more clearly than that in the other two museums. In the population present in the savanna regions lying immediately to the north of the Lower Guinea Forest to reach the southern Sudan, Uganda and Kenya, the grey of the entire head in males is paler than in the populations present south of the forest. In addition, the gular streak is a brighter rose-red, while the ground colour to the breast is lighter red-brown (about Antique Brown (Ridgway (1912))) and rather more amply mottled with white spots. The female of the northern elements is also paler, lighter grey over the head and with the fore-throat more extensively white. There is no difference in size.

While the original description of *ugandensis* (van Someren (1921)) is not in accord with the true nature of the geographical variation, being simply descriptive of individual variation, the name requires to be adopted for the northern subspecies, the range of which extends in the east to East Africa in Uganda and western Kenya.

Cryptospiza reichenovii (Hartlaub) Red-faced Crimson-wing

In *Birds of East Africa* only the race *C. r. australis* Shelley, 1896: Mt Chiradzulu, southern Malawi, is admitted for East Africa, the form *Cryptospiza ocularis* Sharpe, 1902: Rwenzori Range, Uganda, being tacitly treated as synonymous, as in Traylor (1968). A critical study of the material of this crimson-wing in the collection at Tring suggests that there was a measure of justification for Sharpe's naming of the Rwenzori population in the first place, but that if *ocularis* is not now to be recognized, the western Ugandan and adjacent Zairean birds must be placed in nominate *C. reichenovii* (Hartlaub, 1874): Bondongo, Cameroun, rather than with *australis*. A note made at the time the comparisons were effected reads: "A little paler below than most Cameroun *C. r. reichenovii*, but the range of individual variation in the two populations is such as to unite them taxonomically."

Measurements of wing-lengths (mm) are as follows:

6 males from Uganda	52-57 (54.7), SD 1.78
2 females from Uganda	52, 56
10 males from Cameroun	53-56 (53.6), SD 0.94
4 females from Cameroun	52-56 (53.5), SD 1.77

Arising from this study, nominate *C. reichenovii* requires to have its range greatly extended east to East Africa to include the western Ugandan and adjacent Zairean population. All other East African representatives of the species remain as of the race *C. r. australis*. *C. ocellaris* Sharpe is now, accordingly, lodged in the synonymy of *C. r. reichenovii*.

Hypargos niveoguttatus (Peters) Peters' Twinspot
The subspecies *H. n. macrospilotus* Mearns, 1913: Meru Forest, Kenya (Meru NP), is the only one admitted in *Birds of East Africa*, yet, as shown by Clancey (1961), the variation of subspecific relevance in central and eastern Africa is infinitely more complex. Study of material at Tring from eastern aspects of the range in East Africa reveals that two races occur in this region. A neatly prepared series from Mt Endau, Kitui, at 01:16S, 38:35E, which lies immediately south of the type-locality of *macrospilotus*, highlights the fact that coastal females from Kenya and Tanzania differ from the said race in having a darker, more crimson, less orange-red wash to the entire plastron, the rest of the venter much darker, more blackish, grey, with little or no buffish tinge, and with the white spotting heavier. Differences exhibited by males were considered of small taxonomic significance. *H. n. macrospilotus* requires to be considered an interior race, ecologically xeric, and probably restricted to the region of lower Mt Kilimanjaro to Voi, locally north to Kibwezi, Mt Endau and Meru in Kenya (*vide Birds of East Africa*, p. 223). The birds from the more humid coastal areas are referable to *H. n. baddeleyi* Wolters, 1972: Nacala, northern Mozambique, which has a range from coastal Kenya and eastern Tanzania south to northern Mozambique to the north of Zambezia. It was named on 4 skins from Nacala and 6 from Mikindani, in Tanzania (Wolters (1972)).

The population of the interior savanna regions of Tanzania is the race *H. n. idius* Clancey, 1961: Kihambwe R., Kibondo, northwestern Tanzania, in which the female resembles that of *macrospilotus* but differs in having the red over the lateral head extending up to the temporal regions to form post-ocular streaks. This taxon is recognized by Traylor in *Peters' Checklist* (1968), but Wolters felt it was based on individual variation, which is not so. In the country to the east of Lake Tanganyika from Mahari Mt to Ufipa in southwestern Tanzania *idius* is replaced by *H. n. centralis* Clancey, 1961: Baraka, Shaba, Zaire, in which race females do not have a red post-ocular streak, but males show a major extension of red to the hind neck, and over the venter the red of the plastron is bled into the black and white dotted surface. In the continuation of *Peters' Check-list* Traylor (1968) merged *centralis* with *macrospilotus*, which move, I

believe, was incorrect in face of the good characters exhibited by the population. Furthermore, *idius* separates *centralis* from both *macrospilotus* and *baddeleyi*, so that merging the two taxa is highly undesirable. Four races of the present twispot require to be admitted for East Africa: *H. i. baddeleyi*, *H. n. macrospilotus*, *H. n. idius* and *H. n. centralis*.

Plocepasser mahali Smith White-browed Sparrow Weaver
In *Birds of East Africa* the race *P. m. stridens* Clancey, 1968: Kilosa, eastern Tanzania, was not accepted because of a paucity of comparative material. While limited, the series of specimens in the collection of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring, of both *P. m. pectoralis* (Peters, 1868): Inhambane = Tete district, southern Mozambique, and *P. m. stridens* supports recognition of the latter. As seen on the specimens at Tring, *stridens* is darker and more earthen, less sandy or buffish, brown over the dorsum. Ventrally it is clearer white, lacking the subtle buff tinge of *pectoralis*, while the breast spotting is both blacker and heavier. The size is also greater; all these factors are in line with the findings of Clancey (1968) reached years ago on other material.

P. m. stridens ranges from eastern Tanzania, where uncommon, south to the interior of Mozambique north of the Zambezi River, and southern Malawi to the east of the rift. *P. m. pectoralis* replaces it in the dry Tete district of Mozambique, extending to the southern and southeastern aspects of Zambia and northern and northeastern Zimbabwe. Further west in south-central Africa, *pectoralis* is replaced by *P. m. terricolor* Clancey, 1968, described from the mid-Okavango River.

Emberiza flaviventris Stephens Golden-breasted Bunting
In Britton (1980) the race of the present bunting occurring in East Africa is given as *E. f. kalaharica* Roberts, 1932: Tsotsoroga Pan, northern Botswana - a locality in the northeastern periphery of the South West Arid Zone visited during the Vernay-Lang Kalahari Expedition of 1930. As shown in the *SAOS Checklist* (Clancey Ed. (1980)), p. 295, *kalaharica* ranges from northeastern South West Africa (including the Caprivi Strip), southern Angola and Botswana to Zimbabwe, the Transvaal and the northern Cape to northeastern Swaziland and Mozambique between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers.

East African populations of *E. flaviventris* are referable to *E. f. carychroa* Clancey, 1968: Langata Forest, Nairobi, Kenya, differentiated initially in Clancey (1967). In freshly assumed dress, *E. f. carychroa* differs from *kalaharica* in the adult male having the back more saturated red-brown, the feather-fringes dull buffish olive rather than light greyish. On the ventral surface, the breast-band is as dark as in nominate *E. flaviventris* Stephens, 1815: Cape of Good Hope, but the major criterion is that *carychroa* has the white flanks washed with rust-colour, which overlay is lacking in *kalaharica*. In size *carychroa* and *kalaharica* are alike.

Examination of such material as exists in the collection of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring, confirms the differences outlined

above for the East African race, which has a wide range in the equatorial belt of the Afrotropics, extending from southern Sudan and East Africa, south to northern Mozambique and Malawi, and west, south of the Lower Guinea Forest to southern Zaire, much of Zambia and central and northern Angola.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are extended to the following colleagues for the provision of facilities and access to collections: P.R. Colston (British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring), Dr A. Prigogine (Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique, Brussels), Dr M. Louette (Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren), Dr H.E. Wolters (Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn), Dr R.W. Schreiber (Los Angeles County Museum), and Dr J.M. Mendelsohn (Durban Natural History Museum). I am also grateful to Dr D.J. Pearson for joining me in looking at some of the issues discussed above during the course of meetings at the British Museum at Tring.

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(Received 27 November 1985)

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